

Sustainable Economic Development Advisory Committee (SEDAC)
Minutes

June 14, 2007, 8:30 am
Office of Economic Development

Members Present: Chairman Tessier, Councilwoman Robin Cape, Carol King, Becky Anderson

Members Absent: Jacqueline Grant, Brian Moore, Pam Turner, Ray Bailey, Gene Bell, David McConville, Lewis Lankford, Matthew Raker

Resigned: Bruce Tompkins (6/13/07), Carol King (6/14/07, post meeting)

Staff: Sam Powers, Brenda Mills, Janet Dack

Quests: Dan Baechtold (COA Traffic Engineering), Betty Huskins (AdvantageWest), Pam Lewis (AdvantageWest)

Minutes: A quorum was not present, so the March, April and May minutes were not discussed at the meeting.

Report from Sam Powers:

Update on top five issues identified by SEDAC: Mr. Powers reported that substantial progress continues to be made in the top priority areas identified by SEDAC.

- Downtown Master Plan: continues to move forward in '07-'08 City budget and is funded at \$170,000.
- Civic Center: is in Capital Improvement Project.
- Entrepreneurship: City participates in the Service Providers Network and has provided funding for entrepreneurship development through outside agency grants.
- River District: continues to progress through organizations such as the River District Design Review Committee. The City has received Rural Center funding and is in property acquisition mode for implementing the Wilma Dykeman Plan. The Flood Reduction Task Force has made recommendations, and the City has received a significant amount of money in the past two years earmarked for transportation improvements.
- Housing: The City has issued RFQs for two phases of redevelopment of City property to include work force housing. Ralph and Choctaw Streets are in design and City expects to close on property transfer to Mountain Housing Opportunities by December. The Phase Two RFQ is out and three sites present excellent work force housing opportunities.

Update on Riverway Funding: Discussion led by Dan Baechtold.

Mr. Baechtold reviewed the current status: The City has been allocated \$600,000. There are some restrictions on the use of the funds. The discussion today is to get SEDAC

involved, and to delve into what can be done. Chairman Tessier said that this funding is a block of money that can help move the riverway along. The equation to make the plan happen is a common goal: economic development and transportation. Members discussed the relationship of the Wilma Dykeman Plan to this funding. RiverLink and the City were the lead agencies on the original study conducted by Urban Design Associates, which did most of the plan; a transportation consultant was also involved. The plan includes divided medians with greenways but doesn't go into details about how the road should be aligned, etc. When the Master Plan was completed, the City asked for federal assistance to move the project forward -- \$600,000 in federal monies were earmarked and were put into federal transportation funds. There was a log jam in transportation and the earmarked money has just recently moved forward to the North Carolina Department of Transportation.

Discussion continued on the preliminary engineering and design, and how the \$600,000 can be used (environmental concerns, etc.) Members agreed that the best way to move forward is to concentrate on one section and members asked about the state TIP project status. Mr. Baechtold indicated that the estimate in the cost feasibility study was \$20-\$30 million. The project is in the TIP but is not funded. There was discussion about the number of lanes the Riverway should have. The State would prefer to use City funds to focus on a different area. The City owns Lyman Street, so Lyman Street and Riverside Drive might be the place to concentrate on and come out of the study with a complete design, as there is no compelling reason for the state to go through and develop that area.

Chairman Tessier suggested that the City take all the streets, consolidate them and call it the "RiverWay." Then take City crews, do small spot acquisitions and clean up those portions, re-stripe the roads and work with property owners to clean up the sides of the road.

Councilwoman Cape asked when the money will be coming. Mr. Baechtold stated that the state is finalizing the agreement now, and the agreement would be before City Council in the next couple of months.

Members asked if the scope needed to be limited to transportation. Mr. Baechtold indicated that yes, but some can be pedestrian-oriented; the important issue is to determine the optimal goal with all the ideas in mind (flood, capacity, environmental impact). Chairman Tessier questioned if the NCDOT was tying into the RiverLink plan. Mr. Baechtold responded in the affirmative, but indicated that it would need some further discussion. Chairman Tessier indicated he felt a major chokepoint was the Biltmore Ave bridge. Carol King felt to move forward would require dedication by City with set up priorities and champion to move project forward through changes in City Council. Members agreed, not for another plan, but for implementation of the former plan.

Members agreed to send a recommendation to City Council in support of dedicated project management with a portion of the \$600,000. They wished to incorporate key items, including:

- Whereas a bridge in Biltmore is under design that lacks coordination for long term benefit;
- Whereas I-26 is connected to the River and affects its future;
- Where as the Rural Center has funded portions of the Dykeman Plan;
- Whereas LOS is implementing Brown Field Redevelopment in the River District;
- Therefore the COA should support coordination of these key elements with the goal of implementation of Wilma Dykeman Plan.

Members felt that someone on the City staff should be hired/appointed as the champion to focus on the river. Members indicated that City Manager Gary Jackson said last fall that is was “not on his radar.” Members felt this position should be the City Manager’s right-hand man with administrative power to get things done (similar to Leslie Anderson). Members felt that the City 1) has to say “this is a priority” 2) put administrative coordinating person in place to coordinate these programs that are all needed to complete the program.

Certified Entrepreneurial Committee Program:

Presentation by Pam Lewis and Betty Huskins (see attached powerpoint presentation). Members discussed AdvantageWest’s presentation. It was agreed that many of the program goals of the CEC programs are already in place in the Asheville area, and that City Council already provides funding to some providers like Mountain BizWorks. Councilwoman Cape felt that, through the HUB project, the EDC/Chamber had been asked to lead the entrepreneurship development effort. Members noted that Black Mountain had indicated they wished to enroll. It was the consensus of those present that a regional approach to the project seems most appropriate. Staff will contact Ray Denny and convey this information.

Ending Discussion – future role of SEDAC:

Consensus of those present:

- Support CEC as a regional program as County (EDC) as lead; ask City to assist with funding.
- Support Flood Task Force recommendations.
- Support portion of \$600,000 money to go to project management to provide lead staff support position and support PER study of north corridor, Lyman to Broadway.
- Support SEDAC being transformed into River oversite group to work with others active in River design; Chairman Tessier to write letter to City Council with this suggestion, and group will wait for City Council to respond with future direction for SEDAC.

Meeting adjourned at 10:10 am.